

Ukraine. After serving 1½ years as a deputy in the Ukrainian Parliament, Mr. Kuchma became Prime Minister and served in that post from October 1992 until September 1993.

After leaving the post of Prime Minister, Mr. Kuchma became president of the Ukrainian Association of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, which brought together top business leaders and managers from over 14,000 enterprises and workplaces throughout Ukraine. He also led the Interregional Block for Reform, a centrist faction in Parliament, until his election as President of Ukraine.

In his opening remarks at the gala dinner honoring President Kuchma, Ambassador Mark Palmer, former United States envoy to Hungary, praised the Freedom House democracy-building programs in Ukraine—a strategically important country of 52 million people which covers an area the size of France which lies in the very heart of Europe. He praised President Kuchma for his determined commitment to democracy and economic reform.

United States Ambassador at Large for the Newly Independent States, James Collins, underlined Ukraine's strategic importance in Europe, and cited President Kuchma for his contribution to regional stability and peace. He reiterated American material and moral support for Ukraine's efforts to preserve its national identity and build a truly pluralistic and free society while maintaining good relations with the West, and abiding international agreements on nuclear weapons and troop strengths in Europe.

Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Advisor, the President and Freedom

House Trustee, praised President Kuchma for moving firmly in the right direction and making his country a constructive partner in the international community. He also praised the courage and determination of the Ukrainian people who tenaciously maintained their language, customs, and history through centuries of foreign and Communist domination.

Following Ukraine's achievement of freedom at long last, it has demonstrated remarkable political stability. Dr. Brzezinski called attention to the fact that the transition to President Kuchma from his predecessor was a peaceful change carried out through free and fair elections—the first such transition in among all of the former Republics of the Soviet Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union could earn much from Ukraine, Dr. Brzezinski noted. Ukraine has achieved relative ethnic stability, with Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Poles, and Crimean Tatars living in relative harmony.

In his address accepting the award, President Kuchma assured American leaders that Ukraine wants to remain a part of Europe, and he pledged continued cooperation with NATO, the European Community, and other economic and regional organizations. The President said, however, that if Ukraine is to be successful in becoming an integral part of Europe, then the countries of Europe and their leaders must be willing to move toward Ukraine through economic cooperation, trade, and closer political links.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues in the Congress to join me in extending congratulations to President Kuchma personally—as well

as to the Government of Ukraine and to the Ukrainian people—for this well-deserved and most appropriate honor. I also invite my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Freedom House and to its leaders who played key roles in honoring President Kuchma—Vice Chairman of the Board Mark Palmer, Trustee Zbigniew Brzezinski, and President Adrian Karatnycky.

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#### HOUSING OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM EXTENSION ACT

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HON. MICHAEL PATRICK FLANAGAN

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, March 8, 1996*

Mr. FLANAGAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the House on its passage of S. 1494, the Housing Opportunity Program Extension Act. This is an excellent bill which includes language from several bills passed by the House previously, including H.R. 117, the Senior Citizens Housing Safety Act of 1995.

The safety of America's seniors is important to each and everyone of us. S. 1494, like H.R. 117 ensures the safety of America's seniors living in public housing complexes. It toughens placement and eviction policies in order to protect residents of public and assisted housing programs from substance abusers. These provisions are the key reasons I cosponsored H.R. 117 and am in full support of S. 1494.